



## Judicial Council Approves Circuit Split and Judgeships

The Judicial Council of Georgia considered requests for new superior court

judgeships at its August meeting. After reviewing caseload data for the twelve requesting circuits, the Council approved the following requests in order of priority:

1. **Houston** (3rd judge)
2. **Blue Ridge** (3rd judge)
3. **Coweta** (6th judge)
4. **Paulding** (3rd judge)

5. **Dublin** (3rd judge)
6. **Cobb** (10th judge)
7. **Southern** (6th judge)



Judge Doris Downs and Judge Hal Craig consider their ballots during the August meeting. Dr. Greg Arnold (standing) presented the judgeship study data.

8. **Gwinnett** (10th judge)
9. **Enotah** (3rd judge)
10. **Alapaha** (3rd judge).

### Carry-Over Requests

Five of the ten recommended judgeships were carry-overs from

the Council's actions in 2004. The Cobb, Coweta, Dublin, Gwinnett and Southern circuit requests were included for ranking purposes only.

Superior court judgeships are created by the General Assembly.

Effective dates are set forth by statute and funding is authorized at



Presiding Justice Carol Hunstein reviews the material as Chief Judge John H. Ruffin, Jr. announces the results of judgeship ballots.

the time the positions become effective. In the 2005 session the General

Assembly added judgeships in the Appalachian, Cherokee, Flint, Gwinnett and Southern judicial circuits. These judgeship appointments will be made by the Governor for terms beginning January 1, 2006.

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## Sign Language Seminar Held

On October 11-12, 2005, the Georgia Commission on Access and Fairness in the Courts (GCAFC) hosted the first court sponsored seminar for sign language interpreters. The two day workshop was held at the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) Training Center in Macon.

Over 20 freelance sign language interpreters, students, and providers attended.

### Interpreters for the Deaf

Ms. Catherine Thomas of California and Ms. Diane Fowler of Georgia, both legal trained certified

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# People, Places and Events ...

## *In Memoriam*

✱ **Judge Kathy Tyler**, Probate Court of Jasper County, died on September 1, 2006. Judge Tyler was elected to the bench in 1992. Probate Court Clerk **Linda Mock** has been appointed to serve as judge until a special election can be held.

✱ **Mr. Donald A. Starling**, Solicitor-General of Coffee County, died suddenly on October 2, 2005. Mr. Starling became Solicitor-General in January.

✱ **Judge Grace D. Garland** of Thomasville died on November 15, 2005. Judge Garland was Thomas County's first Chief Magistrate, serving 20 years in that capacity until her retirement on January 1, 2005.

## *Honors*

✱ **Chief Justice Sears** received the Atlanta Bar Association's annual leadership award at a luncheon on Tuesday, November 1, 2005. The Atlanta Bar award is presented to members who inspire others by their work in the profession.

✱ On October 22, 2005, **Judge Aaron Cohn**, Juvenile Court of Muscogee County, was awarded the University of Georgia's Bill Hartman Award, given each year to a former UGA athlete who has excelled after graduation. Judge Cohn played tennis for UGA from 1935-1937 and is currently the longest-serving juvenile court judge in the nation.

## *Transitions*

✱ **Judge Virginia Andrews**, Probate Court of Worth County, has announced her retirement on December 31, 2005. Judge Andrews has served twenty-five years on the bench. Chief Clerk Sheryl Hall will assume the judge's duties until a special election can be held to fill the unexpired term.

✱ **Judge M. Gino Brogdon**, Atlanta Judicial Circuit, has announced his resignation effective December 9, 2005. Judge Brogdon was appointed by Gov. Roy Barnes in July 2002. He served on the Fulton County State Court prior to his appointment to the superior court bench.



✱ **Assoc. Judge Sharon Hill**, Juvenile Court of Fulton County, has left the bench to serve as executive director of the Georgia Appleseed Center.

✱ **Mr. Nolan Martin**, Eighth District Court Administrator, began work in August as the administrator for Indigent Defense Services with the Georgia Public Defender Standards Council. **Mr. John Fitzner, III**, is the new Eighth District Court Administrator.

✱ **Ms. Molly J.M. Perry** has been named Executive Director of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council by Gov. Sonny Perdue. She began her new duties on October 1, 2005 after more than 25 years serving the Georgia court system. Ms. Perry joined the staff of the Administrative Office of the Courts in 1977 after completing her bachelor's degree at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. Since 1993, she has served as executive director of the Council of Superior Court Judges.

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## Mr. Cowart Honored for 20 Years as DCA

✱ **Judge A. Wallace Cato** (right), South Georgia Circuit, presents a plaque to Second District Court Administrator **John Cowart** recognizing his twenty years of service to the courts of Southwest Georgia. Mr. Cowart was named to the position on June 1, 1985.

The presentation was made on August 25, 2005. ☺



# People, Places and Events ...

✱ **Mr. Victor Webb** retired from the Administrative Office of the Courts on September 30, 2005. Mr. Webb began with the AOC in October 1977 as Fiscal Officer and ended his career as an IT Field Service Technician in the 2nd JAD.



Mr. Victor Webb

## Appointment

✱ On November 3, 2005 Governor Sonny Perdue announced the appointment of **Mr. Jeffery H. Kight** as Solicitor-General of Coffee County.

## Administrative Office of the Courts Staff Notes

✱ **Mr. Bob Bray** was named Associate Director of Planning and Development on October 1, 2005.

✱ **Ms. Tresha Eaglin** was named Assistant Director for Training on October 1, 2005.

✱ **Mr. Chris Patterson** joined the AOC as Assistant Director for Judicial Liaison on September 1, 2005. Mr. Patterson's professional experience includes employment at the Fulton County Superior Court Pretrial Division, the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, and the 21st Judicial District of Kansas.

## IT Conference

✱ Staff of the AOC Information Technology Section attended an educational retreat at Unicoi State Park on October 4-6, 2005. Mr. Tom Clarke of the National Center for State Courts addressed the group regarding national initiatives in court technology and their implications.

Invited guests from the Department of Corrections, Board of Pardons and Paroles, Department of Public Safety and trial and appellate courts had an opportunity to interact with AOC staff regarding possible collaborations via e-filing and data sharing technologies. A demonstration of the State of Florida Judicial Information System was presented by Metatomix.

For further details on the conference, please contact Mr. Jorge Basto or Mr. Byron Branch of AOC Information Technology. ☞

## Justice Hunstein Speaks to Magistrates on Disability Issues



**P**residing Justice Carol Hunstein (right) spoke to Georgia chief magistrates and others on "Access and Disability Issues in the Court" at a training session held in Peachtree City on November 2, 2005.

Justice Hunstein has chaired commissions and committees on issues related to gender, racial and

ethnic bias in the courts for more than fifteen years. She now chairs the Supreme Court Commission on Access and Fairness in the Courts.

Justice Hunstein related her personal experiences as a young mother who struggled with serious illness and resulting disability in pursuing a legal career. ☞

## Judicial Council Recommendations cont.

### Circuit Split Approved

The Council also approved a request from the Alcovy Judicial Circuit for creation of a fiftieth circuit. Newton and Walton counties would each become separate circuits, if authorized by the General Assembly. The circuit split is needed because of population and case-load growth in the two counties. ☞

## Trends in Superior Court Filings ...

The superior courts of Georgia reached an historic high for total filings in calendar year 2004. Total filings have increased gradually since 1995 and now stand at 366,132. Criminal filings have remained steady, totalling 130,000 in 1995 and 135,000 in 2004. Criminal filings represent 37% of total filings in Superior Court.

### *Domestic Relations Filings*

Although domestic relations filings have fluctuated over the past ten years, filings for 2004 (150,842) are almost identical to the number of filings for 2000 (151,398). Domestic relations filings currently represent around 41% of the total filings for superior courts in Georgia.

In 2003, a marked decrease in domestic relations filings contributed to the slight decrease in total filings. Criminal filings for 2003 were virtually unchanged from the previous year. A substantial increase in general civil filings, however, resulted in a smaller decrease in total filings.

### *General Civil Filings*

Over the ten-year period, general civil filings have increased substantially. The increase is reflected in the annual increase of general civil filings from 2000 (58,864) to 2004 (80,087). General civil filings represent only 22% of the 2004 total superior court filings. The trends are strikingly similar for total filings and general civil filings.

### *Future Trends*

If current trends continue, criminal filings will remain stable, while domestic relations filings will remain unpredictable. Domestic relations have represented over 40% of all filings for almost ten years. Since total filings have increased over the past five years at an average rate of 2% per year, the estimated number of Superior Court filings for 2009 is 404,239 filings.

For more information on caseload filing trends, please contact Dr. Greg Arnold, AOC Assistant Director for Research, at 404-656-5171. ☎

#### Total Filings

1995	308,872
1996	328,290
1997	333,001
1998	340,573
1999	331,616
2000	343,167
2001	348,530
2002	356,548
2003	354,882
2004	366,132

#### Domestic Relations Filings

1995	134,800
1996	148,246
1997	139,453
1998	143,495
1999	145,145
2000	151,398
2001	152,291
2002	156,478
2003	146,325
2004	150,842

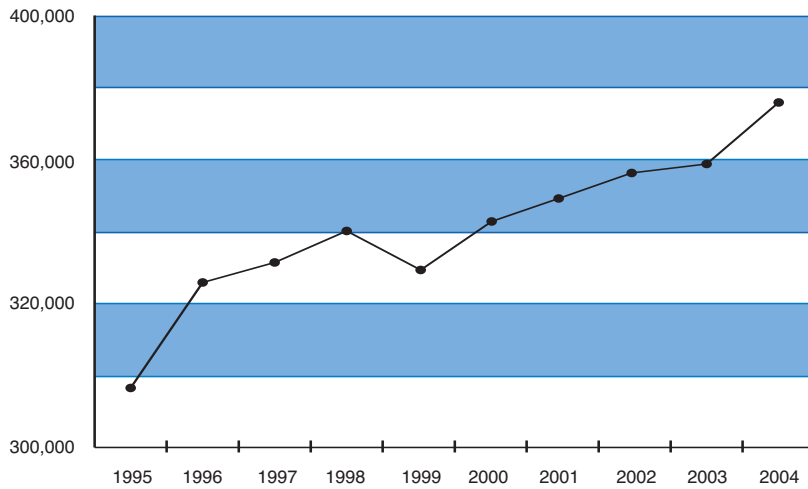
#### General Civil Filings

1995	54,650
1996	57,788
1997	62,816
1998	63,187
1999	59,881
2000	58,864
2001	61,707
2002	68,372
2003	76,504
2004	80,087

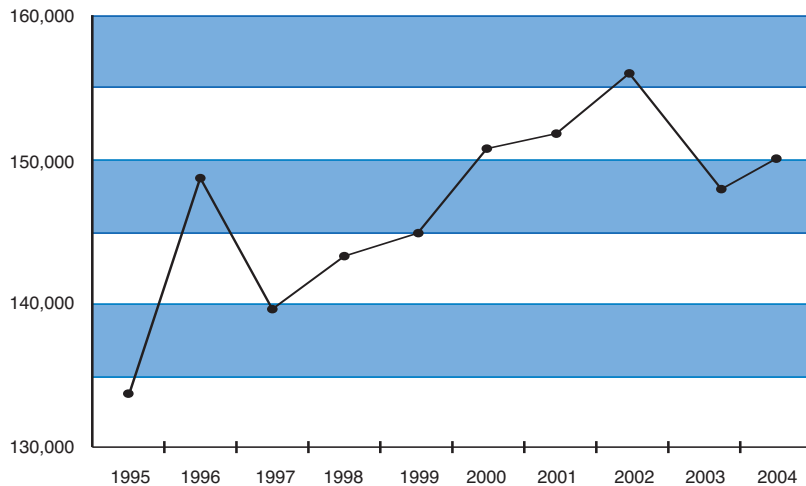


## ... 1995 - 2004

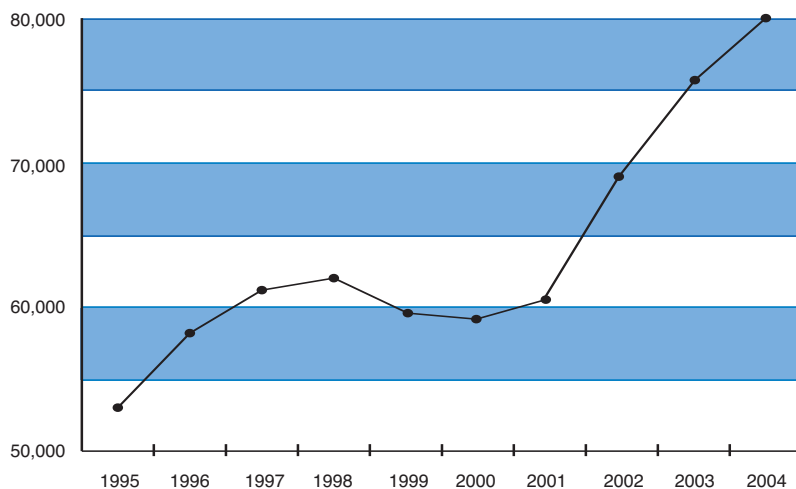
**Figure 1. Total Filings**



**Figure 2. Domestic Relations Filings**



**Figure 3. General Civil Filings**



## Sign Language Seminar cont.

sign language interpreters served as instructors for the workshop. The attendees were briefed on Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Code of Ethics, the Georgia Code of Professional Responsibility for Court Interpreters, and the National Center for State Court Model Code for Interpreters. Rules of professionalism, legal procedures, and terminology were discussed.

The need for trained interpreters: those certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) and the National Association for the Deaf (NAD) continues to increase. The Commission's primary focus is to make Georgia courts more accessible to all court-users.

The sign language seminar received exemplary commendations from participants and future programs will be offered by the commission. WMGT-TV of Macon covered the proceedings which were featured as an evening news story.

For more information, contact Ms. Stephanie Chambliss at [chamblis@gaaoc.us](mailto:chamblis@gaaoc.us) or by phone: 404-656-5171. ♿

## Disability Guide for Courts

To order a copy of the Disability Guide for Courts, Contact Stephanie Chambliss, 404-656-5171 or [chamblis@gaaoc.us](mailto:chamblis@gaaoc.us)

## Child Placement Conference Held in Augusta

**J**udge Michael Key, Troup County Juvenile Court, delivered a moving address to the more than 500 child protective case managers, service-providers, group home workers, attorneys, judges and child advocates attending the Sixth Annual Child Placement Conference held in Augusta, November 7-9, 2005,

### Child Support Guidelines Hearings

**A** series of public hearings have been planned regarding proposed changes in Georgia's Child Support Guidelines. These hearings will give the public an opportunity to comment on proposals and recommendations that will be presented to the Legislature. The first hearing will be webcast on [www.georgiacourts.org](http://www.georgiacourts.org)

**December 5, 2005**

**6:00 - 8:00 p.m.**

**GPTV Studios, Atlanta**

**December 12, 2005**

**6:30 - 8:30 p.m.**

**Cunningham Center, Columbus**

**December 13, 2005**

**6:30 - 8:30 p.m.**

**Albany State University, Albany**

**December 19, 2005**

**6:30 - 8:30 p.m.**

**Georgia Coastal Center, Savannah**

For more information, contact Ms. Jill Radwin, AOC, at 404-463-1849. ☞

Judge Key compared his own emotions upon suddenly entering the medical system following his heart attack to the uncertainty, confusion and terror a child experiences when plunged into the foster care system.



**Judge Michael Key**

He urged the group to embrace the reform efforts currently underway in Georgia with enthusiasm. Judge Key stressed that he will never again feel as secure as he did prior to his heart attack, nor will the Georgia children who are removed from their homes.

Judge Key, a leader in the state's child welfare reform efforts, currently serves on the Board of Trustees of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and is a past-president of the Georgia Council of Juvenile Court Judges.

Other Georgia juvenile court judges participating in the Child Placement Conference training sessions:

**Judge Steve Teske**

Clayton County Juvenile Court

**Judge Peggy H. Walker**

Douglas County Juvenile Court

**Judge Thomas Britt Hammond**

Toombs Circuit Juvenile Courts

**Judge Tom Rawlings**

Middle Circuit Juvenile Courts

**Judge John W. Beam, Jr.**

Chatham County Juvenile Court ☞

## Dutch Judges Visit Georgia

**T**hree judges from Amsterdam are pictured at a briefing on the Georgia court system held in September at the AOC. The group of court officials from the Netherlands came to the States under the sponsorship of the International Judicial Academy in Washington, DC. Their time in Georgia was planned by the Institute of Continuing Judicial Education and included stops at trial courts in the area. ☞



From left to right: Mr. A.H. (Bert) van Delden, Chairman, Council on the Judiciary; Mrs. W. (Wil) Tonkens-Gerkema, Chair, Dutch Association of the Judiciary; Mr. N. (Nico) Verheij, Senior Legal Advisor, Dutch Directorate for Legislation.

# Courts Directory Corrections

## **SUPERIOR COURT**

### Alcovy Circuit

Judge Eugene Benton  
770-267-1339/F 266-1684

### Stone Mountain Circuit

Judge Linda Warren Hunter  
6220 DeKalb County Courthouse

Judge Mark Anthony Scott  
FAX 404-687-3978  
mascot@co.dekalb.ga.us

## **SENIOR JUDGES**

### Superior Courts

Judge Robert P. Mallis  
5220 DeKalb County Courthouse  
404-371-4700/F 371-2817

Judge A. Blenn Taylor  
102 Mews Circle  
St. Simons Island, GA 31522  
912-634-7431/F 634-7431

### Courts of Georgia

Judge A. Ronald Cook  
770-227-7244/F 233-9869

### Magistrate Courts

Add: Judge Robert Bennett  
PO Box 63  
Georgetown, GA 39854

## **JUVENILE COURT**

### Brunswick Circuit

Judge George M. Rountree  
1725 Reynolds Street, Suite 101  
grountree@glynncounty-ga.gov

### Conasauga Circuit

Assoc. Judge Jim Wilbanks  
jim@wilbanksllaw.com

## **MAGISTRATE COURT**

### Catoosa County

Judge Raymond Victor Wells, III

### Cobb County

Judge Andrew A. Lewis  
358 Roswell Street, Suite 1140  
Marietta, GA 30060  
770-874-8700/F 874-8740

### Jenkins County

Add: Judge Hester O. Oglesby  
PO Box 892  
Millen, GA 30442  
478-982-5580/F 982-4911

Delete: Teresa Wommack

### Laurens County

Add: Judge Faith Le'Ette Snell  
PO Box 934  
Dublin, GA 31040-0934  
478-296-9791

Delete: Noah C. Burkett

### Liberty County

Add: Judge David L. Aspinwall, III  
PO Box 103  
Hinesville, GA 31310  
912-876-5330/F 876-2474

Delete: Judge Jack Elder

### Rabun County

Judge Frank Sutton  
Judge David Adolph  
706-782-2285/F 782-7970

## **MUNICIPAL COURT**

### Alpharetta

Delete: Judge Tad Ransopher

### Helena

Add: Judge Ashley W. McLaughlin  
PO Box 429  
McRae, GA 31055  
229-868-7792/F 868-7790

Delete: Judge Tom Everett

### Kingsland

Delete: Judge Louis Williams

### Peachtree City

Chief Judge Eric K. Maxwell  
225 S. Glynn Street, Suite A

### Stillmore, Wadley

Add: Judge Tina E. Maddox  
205 Smith Street  
PO Box 1343  
Vidalia, GA 30475  
912-537-3025/F 537-0264

## **SOLICITORS-GENERAL**

### Cherokee County

678-493-6360/F 493-6362

### Clarke County

Add: Morris H. Wiltshire, Jr.

Delete: Ralph W. Powell, Jr.

### Clayton County

Leslie Miller Terry  
9151 Tara Boulevard, Suite 3SL01  
770-477-3344/F 678-479-5117

### Fayette County

Jamie Inagawa  
jinagawa@fayettecountyga.gov

## **OFFICIAL COURT REPORTERS**

Add: Pat Brewer  
PO Box 15171  
Tallahassee, FL 32317-5171  
850-878-6259/F 878-2034

## **PUBLIC DEFENDERS**

Brunswick Circuit  
1803 Gloucester Street, Suite 114  
FAX 912-279-2964

## **AG Opinion**

### OFFICIAL OPINION

**Additional penalties added to traffic violations.** The additional penalty imposed by OCGA § 15-21-179 applies, unless there is a specific exception, where a court imposes a fine for a violation of any traffic law and is not limited to violations of those laws that are set forth in Chapter 6 of Title 40 of the Official Code of Georgia. (9/27/05 No. 2005-5)

# Chief Justice Swears-in “Transition” Mentors

Chief Justice Leah Ward Sears was present November 9, 2005 at the initial orientation session for the

“Transition to Law Practice” Program in Atlanta to greet lawyer/mentors as they begin their work with novice attorneys. A simulcast via closed circuit television beamed

the Chief Justice’s remarks to the session being held at the Tifton offices of the State Bar. The group of more than sixty lawyers took the



Chief Justice Leah Ward Sears administers the oath.

oath of office following a morning educational session designed to prepare them for their duties.

The Transition to Law Practice program, sponsored by the Supreme Court of Georgia and the State Bar, is mandatory for first year lawyers beginning the practice of law in the state after January 1, 2006.

A national model effort, the program will assist novice lawyers in successfully moving from law school into the practical realities of

a legal career. Ms. Cynthia Clanton, General Counsel, Administrative Office of the Courts,

served on the State Bar mentor committee and was among those sworn-in by the Chief Justice.

For information on the Transition to Law Practice Program contact Mr. Doug Ashworth at the

State Bar, 404-527-8704, or Ms. Clanton, 404-656-5171, at the AOC. ☎



Lawyers who have volunteered to serve as mentors in the State Bar of Georgia’s “Transition into Law Practice” program were sworn-in at the State Bar offices in Atlanta.

LEAH WARD SEARS  
Chief Justice  
DAVID L. RATLEY  
Director  
COURTS JOURNAL STAFF  
Billie Bolton  
Ashley G. Stollar

Georgia Courts Journal  
Administrative Office of the Courts  
244 Washington Street, S.W., Suite 300  
Atlanta, GA 30334-5900



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